Themes for ‘The British Academy Debates’ in 2016/17
Call for preliminary proposals

Introduction
The British Academy Debates were started in spring 2014 as a new series of flagship public events, building on the publication of Prospering Wisely and tackling major challenges of our time. Following on from the success of the first two series, which explored Ageing and Immigration, the Academy is now planning to broaden the scope of future series, enabling each topic to be explored and presented through a wider range of activities over a period of several months, achieving greater critical mass and impact for the chosen theme. Details from the previous series can be seen here www.britishacademy.ac.uk/debates.

A core element of each theme would be the series of ‘British Academy Debates’ – a minimum of three interlinked public panel discussions, typically with one in London and two elsewhere in the UK. The objectives of these Debates are:

- to showcase humanities and social science ‘at work’, helping to illuminate and address a topical issue which represents a major challenge of our time;
- to illustrate the public value of humanities and social science knowledge and expertise to non-specialist audiences across the UK;
- to engage new, public audiences with the work of the British Academy

Other activities through which the theme could be explored include, but are not limited to:

- a piece of research commissioned in advance of the series to inform the Debates;
- a policy project analysing key issues in the area of the Debate topic;
- other public events – possibly including the annual keynote ‘British Academy Lecture’;
- private roundtable meetings where academics can engage with policy-makers;
- early career network activities;
- printed outputs – including a booklet summarising issues and arguments (possibly produced in advance to cue the Debates);
- dedicated coverage on the Academy’s website – including blog pieces, videos, and links to other resources on the subject;
- collaboration with partner organisations to extend the nature and reach of the discussion.
Criteria

Proposed themes for future British Academy Debates series should meet the following criteria:

- a topical issue, which could be said to represent a major challenge of our time;
- an issue where contemporary, rigorous academic research exists to be brought to bear on the current debate;
- it must have scope for the involvement of both the humanities and social sciences;
- it should have an international dimension, allowing the consideration of perspectives from beyond the UK;
- the three British Academy Debates at the heart of the series must be accessible and engaging for a public, non-academic, non-specialist audience.

Furthermore, the Academy is keen to use the opportunity of the Debates to engage audiences outside London, so activities will be planned to take place in diverse locations across the UK.

Submission of preliminary proposals

Proposals are welcomed from Fellows of the Academy (either as individuals, or acting on behalf of Academy committees) for themes for future series of the British Academy Debates. The Academy seeks to adopt two themes each year; each theme will have (typically) a presentational window of up to six months.

The deadline for preliminary proposals for the academic year 2016/17 is 16 January 2015.

Themes for autumn 2016 and spring 2017 will be confirmed by the Council of the British Academy at its meeting in February 2015. This long lead time will provide an extended planning cycle in which the various options for exploring the theme can be considered and developed.

Preliminary proposals should be submitted on the attached form to:

Naomi Gibson
Head of Public Events
n.gibson@britac.ac.uk
020 7969 5264

You are strongly advised to discuss your proposal in advance with Naomi Gibson.

Subsequent development of proposals

Should your proposed theme be approved, the next stage will be the establishment of a small steering group to advise on the development of the theme, convened by the Head of Public Events, and typically including a representative from a Humanities Section and a Social Sciences Section of the Academy, in addition to the proposer (to ensure that the theme developed encompasses an interdisciplinary approach to the topic). The Academy reserves the right to review and change the proposal following guidance from the steering group and other relevant committees.